

## RECREATION ALTERNATIVES FOR THE NHAL

At the beginning of the master planning process for the NHAL, the public identified important recreational issues. Given the property's designation as a state forest, the NHAL vision and goals, information collected in the Recreational Supply and Demand Assessment, the property staff's extensive management experience, and public input, a range of recreational concepts were presented to the public. Two years ago, members of the public participated in a series of workshops to further develop this range of management concepts. The feedback received at that time, along with other sources of information and Administrative Code guidelines, contributed to the development of the four Recreation Alternatives A-D.

Recreation on state land is described in Wisconsin's Administrative Code (NR 1.61). It identifies traditional outdoor recreational uses, including "hunting, fishing, trapping, walking, nature study and berry picking." These activities will be available across the NHAL, regardless of the master plan's decisions. Other types of recreational uses, however, will only be available on the NHAL as authorized by the property master plan. The Administrative Code lists "camping, bicycling, equestrian uses, field trials, and snowmobiling or other motorized activities" but other uses may be approved as well.

The discussion below begins with a description of the current recreation management on the NHAL. Then each alternative in the range of recreation alternatives is described. Alternative A presents recreation management options for the most primitive recreational setting on the property. On the other end of the spectrum, Alternative D contains the most highly developed recreational options for the forest.

Water-based recreation, including fishing, boating, and jet-skiing is only minimally addressed in the alternatives because the master plan can control access to water but not many of the other variables involved. For instance, fishing regulations are outside the scope of the property master plan.

The "Compatibility" section on page 97 explains how the recreation alternatives relate to the land management and wild resources alternatives.

In your feedback on the alternatives, feel free to "mix and match" different aspects of the alternatives to create a recreation management alternative that you would prefer. We ask that you evaluate which aspects of the alternatives best serve to meet the property vision and goals as well as your own values for the NHAL. We are particularly interested in the reasons you prefer aspects of one alternative over another, and encourage you to explain your choices in the feedback section at the end of this document. Feedback from the range of alternatives, along with information and guidelines from a variety of other sources, will influence the creation of the preferred alternative, the next step in the master planning process.

## Current Recreational Opportunities

### What is our current recreation management like?

Outdoor recreation opportunities are diverse and abundant in the NHAL State Forest. The NHAL is the largest and most visited state forest, with over two million recorded visitors annually. In particular, visitors are drawn to its water resources. The NHAL is blessed with one of the highest concentrations of lakes in the world, popular for boating, fishing, canoeing, jet-skiing, and swimming.

The NHAL provides a range of camping, trails, wild resources, and other recreation opportunities. It is located close to the tourist communities of Minocqua, Woodruff, and Tomahawk. Visitation to the NHAL is steadily increasing, and growth is expected to continue. ([See Current Map](#))

**Current recreation management:****Hunting:**

Each fall the NHAL State Forest draws hunters from across the state and the region for gun and archery deer hunting in particular. Ruffed grouse, woodcock and other small game hunting and trapping are also popular. There are abundant small and big game hunting and trapping opportunities on the NHAL. Hundreds of miles of logging roads and non-designated trails are open for hunting. Some unimproved roads are open and accessible to street licensed motor vehicles, as well.

**Camping:**

The NHAL offers 18 family campgrounds with approximately 900 campsites, plus two outdoor group camping areas that accommodate a total of 100 people. Most of the campgrounds are small. Two thirds have about 50 or fewer campsites and the two largest have roughly 100 sites. Five campgrounds offer special facilities for disabled campers. Hunter camping is seasonally available. Electrical sites are not available on the NHAL.

Remote (canoe and backpacking): In addition to campgrounds, 131 remote canoe and wilderness (backpack) campsites are scattered across the NHAL for people wanting less social, more primitive camping conditions. Presently, there are 118 canoe campsites across the forest. Most of the sites are located along the Manitowish River, but other sites are scattered across the forest to take advantage of the abundant water resources of the property.

Rustic: About two thirds of the campsites (618 sites in 14 campgrounds) are rustic style with only the basic amenities such as hand-pumped water and pit toilets.

Modern: Just over one third of the campsites (349 sites in four campgrounds) are served by showers and flush toilets.

Generators: Currently, generators may be used by permit from 10 am to 6 pm on selected campgrounds.

**Day Use Areas and Swimming Beaches:**

The NHAL has eight developed picnic areas and nine designated swimming beaches.

**Snowmobile Trails:**

The NHAL currently provides an extensive snowmobile trail network that links state land with private and county snowmobile trails. Over 400 snowmobile trail miles exist on the NHAL.

**ATV Trails:**

The NHAL does not have ATV trails. Some town road routes within the NHAL boundary are open to ATVs. Town road routes are under the jurisdiction of individual townships.

**Primitive Trail System:**

Currently, there are three designated hiking trails totaling 18.5 miles, but no extensive trail system for backpackers. However, a large network of woods roads are available for hiking.

**Cross Country Ski Trails:**

Seventy miles of cross-country ski trail are available on the NHAL. Currently groomed trails include the Raven Trail, Madeline Trail, McNaughton Trail, Escanaba Trail, Shannon Trail, Razorback Ridge, and the North Lakeland Discovery Center (formerly the Statehouse Lake Trail).

**Mountain Bike Trails:**

There are currently 32 miles of designated mountain bike trails. All the mountain bike trails also serve as cross country ski trails in the winter. Mountain bikes may also be ridden in undesignated areas across most of the forest.

**Snowshoe trails:**

Snowshoeing is currently available throughout the forest, except on cross country ski trails. There are no designated snowshoeing trails.

**Other Designated Trails:**

Four nature (interpretive) trails total nearly seven miles.

**Undesignated Trail Opportunities:**

Recreational opportunities may be found on the NHAL at large in addition to those provided by its developed facilities. Hundreds of miles of logging roads and non-designated trails are open for all types of non-motorized uses, like hiking, skiing, horseback riding and mountain biking. Some unimproved roads are open and accessible to licensed motor vehicles, as well.

**Horseback Riding:**

Currently, horseback riders can ride on most of the forest, unless they are in a prohibited area. For instance, horseback riding is prohibited on nature trails. There are no designated horseback riding trails.

**Boat Landings:**

The NHAL currently maintains over 100 designated boat landings, including ramps for motor boats on developed sites and carry-in only landings on more remote lakes.

**Non-motorized Areas:**

The NHAL provides remote recreation in areas that are closed to motorized recreation through its existing Wild and Wilderness Areas. These areas are provided for those seeking more pristine, quiet “backcountry” experiences in areas with few support facilities or motorized vehicles. The NHAL includes a 5,460-acre wilderness area and a total of 27,900 acres of wild areas with limited motor vehicle access. These opportunities are discussed further in the Wild Resources Areas Alternatives I-V. The Forest also has 19 wilderness lakes and 41 wild lakes which offer remote, non-motorized water recreation.

**Education and Interpretive Center:**

Currently, the NHAL maintains four forest interpretive trails (Fallison, Raven, North Trout, and Star Lake) and the Manitowish River Canoe Trail. A rustic Nature Center exists in the Crystal-Muskie area. Interpretive programs are held from Memorial Day to Labor Day at NHAL campgrounds.

## Recreation Alternative A

***Goal: Provide for a variety of recreation activities and experiences, but emphasize primitive style, non-motorized recreation in a remote setting.***

**Summary of recreation management in Alternative A:**

Recreation management and opportunities under this alternative would emphasize the more primitive, non-motorized nature of this land management alternative. As a result, this alternative reduces the number of campground sites at established family campgrounds on the forest, de-emphasizes motorized recreation, and emphasizes non-motorized recreation opportunities across the property. ([See Map A.](#))

Recreation management associated with this alternative would have the greatest compatibility with the Wild Resources Area options on the property. This alternative was written to be consistent with some Wild Resources Areas Alternatives, including Alternative V, which presents the greatest number of potential wild areas of the five Wild Resources Areas Alternatives, I-V. In these areas, only non-motorized recreation would be permitted.

In this alternative, recreation management would focus on the most primitive and rustic setting on the property. As a result:

- ◆ Four family campgrounds would have greater seclusion and separation between campsites, through the removal of nine rustic campsites and 55 modern campsites.
- ◆ Carrol Lake campground (currently 18 rustic sites) would be closed and converted to a Day Use Area.
- ◆ Generators would not be permitted in campgrounds.

- ◆ Additional opportunities for dispersed camping away from existing campgrounds and in remote areas of the forest would be provided. Some backcountry campsites would have fewer amenities.
- ◆ Two non-motorized areas would be created to provide quiet areas for recreators. Some forest roads would be closed for recreation, limiting motorized access to portions of the forest that people can drive to today.
- ◆ Snowmobilers would experience a reduction of trail miles from present day use, since snowmobile trails that conflict with Wild Resources Areas or non-motorized areas would be rerouted or removed.
- ◆ There is no provision in Alternative A for ATV trails on the forest (no change from the current condition).
- ◆ Grooming of cross-country ski trails across the forest would be eliminated. Trails with Land Use Agreements or Volunteer Agreements would be reviewed as they expire to decide if grooming would continue.
- ◆ Opportunities for remote, non-motorized boating could be increased as boat landings on some popular lakes that allow vehicle access in presently would be removed.
- ◆ Hunters would have slightly reduced access to some areas of the forest through road closures; opportunities for remote or walk-in hunting experiences would increase.
- ◆ Additional hiking and backpacking trails that connect to one another and with neighboring communities would provide another mode of access to much of the forest.
- ◆ This alternative retains many of the hundreds of miles of logging roads and non-designated trails that are presently open for non-motorized uses such as skiing, hiking, snowshoeing and biking.

### **Description of recreation management in Alternative A by topic:**

#### **Hunting:**

Hunters would have slightly less motorized access to the property than under present day conditions in the proposed non-motorized areas. In these areas, hunters would experience a more remote, walk-in setting as forest roads and other motorized access points would be closed. Access to roads would also depend on the number of Type I Wild Resources Areas selected, since roads within these areas would be closed. (See Wild Resources Alternatives I-V, pages 83-96.) Hunter camping during the nine-day deer season would still be seasonally available by permit.

#### **Camping:**

##### Remote Canoe and Backpacking Campsites:

Alternative A would provide for greater dispersed camping opportunities away from established campgrounds. For instance, more canoe campsites would be added along the Manitowish and Wisconsin Rivers. Presently, there are 118 canoe campsites across the forest. Most of the sites are located along the Manitowish River, but other sites are scattered across the forest to take advantage of the abundant water resources of the property.

Remote campsites in designated Wild Resources Areas would be reduced to a primitive class. As described in the Department's Master Plan guidance, primitive campsites in Wild Resources Areas would be widely dispersed, minimally cleared, single unit sites with a fire ring, pit toilets and other amenities in keeping with the Wild Resources Area setting.

##### Rustic Campgrounds:

In keeping with the more primitive nature of the property, Alternative A proposes to increase the distance between campsites in one rustic campground and decrease the number of rustic campsites from 618 to about 600 with the closing of Carrol Lake. The Recreational Supply and Demand assessment found that campers are seeking more secluded sites farther from the noises and view of other campers. (Watkins et al, 2001) Rustic campgrounds across the forest could be evaluated for opportunities to remove some campsites thus increasing the distance between campers.

- ◆ Indian Mounds Area: Approximately 8 of the 40 sites at this family campground on Tomahawk Lake would be removed to make the remaining campsites more secluded.
- ◆ Carrol Lake: In Alternative A, this campground would be closed and converted to a Day Use Area with a boat landing.

**Modern Campgrounds:**

In keeping with the more primitive nature of the property, Alternative A also proposes to increase the distance between campsites in three modern campgrounds. Modern campgrounds across the forest could be evaluated for opportunities to remove some campsites thus increasing the distance between campers. About 55 of the approximately 280 campsites at the following locations would be removed to make the remaining campsites more secluded:

- ◆ Clear Lake
- ◆ Crystal Lake
- ◆ Big Muskellunge Lake

**Generators:**

Permit holders may currently use generators in some family campgrounds at certain times of the day. Alternative A would prohibit the use of generators in all campgrounds to emphasize a more primitive setting.

**Day Use Areas:**

Currently, the NHAL provides eight day use areas. In all alternatives, an additional day use area would be created when the Carroll Lake campground is closed (Alternative A) or moves to the other side of the lake (Alternatives B-D). See the camping section above for more information.

**Non-Motorized Areas:**

Alternative A proposes two non-motorized areas of 2300 and 2000 acres respectively. (See Map A.) The non-motor areas would provide increased opportunities for non-motorized recreation. Vehicles would be prohibited for recreational purposes but would be allowed for timber harvests or other forest management. In contrast, Wild Resources Areas (see Alternatives I-V) are closed to motors for recreation and most forest management.

**Snowmobile:**

Alternative A proposes to reduce the total number of snowmobile trails across the property to about 330 miles from the current 370 miles. In addition, one section of trail would be rerouted. (See Map A.) Snowmobile trail reductions are designed to allow for Wild Resources Areas.

**All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs):**

Currently, ATVs are not allowed on the NHAL. There is no provision in this alternative for ATV trails on the property.

**Other Trails:**

- ◆ Alternative A, like Alternatives B-D, proposes a new hiking trail around Clear Lake. (See Map A.)
- ◆ Alternative A, like Alternatives B-D, proposes a new wheelchair-accessible nature trail at the Crystal Lake Interpretive Center.

**Primitive Trail System:**

Provide for a connecting system of primitive backpacking trails. These trails may pass through non-motorized recreation areas and potentially Wild Resources Areas. Primitive trails are described in the Department's Master Planning guidance (NR 44) as having a minimally developed single-file trail with a minimal tread width with a rough, ungraded bed where large rocks, stumps and downed logs may be present. Trails of this type in this alternative are proposed in the following locations:

- ◆ Siphon Springs
- ◆ Emerald and Fallison Lakes
- ◆ Nixon/Partridge Lake
- ◆ Windpudding/McNaughton area

This system of primitive trails would connect to a series of widely separated primitive campsites in the associated non-motorized recreation areas on the property. These trails do not appear on the map.

**Cross Country Ski Trails:**

The following cross-country ski trails are groomed under present management on the forest. In keeping with the more primitive nature of this recreation management alternative, these cross country ski trails would be open but not groomed (see Map A):

- ◆ Raven Trail
- ◆ Escanaba Trail
- ◆ Madeline Trail
- ◆ McNaughton Trail

Shannon Lake Ski Trail is presently maintained under a private volunteer agreement. The North Lakeland Discovery Center (formerly the Statehouse Lake Ski Trail) and Razorback Ridge are currently operated with Land Use Agreements/Leases from the state forest with private groups in the community. In Alternative A, grooming of all three trails would be reviewed as the agreements expire.

**Mountain Bike Trails:**

Cross country ski trails provide all of the designated mountain bike trails on the forest. This alternative makes no change to the number of designated trails provided for mountain bike riders. Mountain bikes may also be ridden in undesignated areas across most of the forest.

**Snowshoe trails:**

Alternative A, like Alternatives B-D, proposes the following trails be designated, marked snowshoe trails in the winter:

- ◆ Fallison Lake (existing nature trail)
- ◆ North Trout Lake (existing nature trail)
- ◆ Star Lake (existing nature trail)
- ◆ Clear Lake Snowshoe Trail (new trail on Map A)

**Horseback trails:**

Currently, horseback riders can ride on most of the forest, unless they are in a prohibited area. For instance, horseback riding is prohibited on nature trails. There are no designated horseback riding trails. Alternative A proposes no change in this policy.

**Boat Landings:**

No new boat landings would be planned in this alternative. Boat landings would be eliminated in non-motor areas to provide non-motorized recreation opportunities.

**Education and Interpretive Center:**

In Alternative A, interpretive opportunities would remain at current levels while expanding “self guided” opportunities. The four forest interpretive trails (Fallison, Raven, North Trout, and Star Lake) that we currently have and the Manitowish River Canoe Trail would be maintained. Aside from developing updated interpretive signs, no further development would be done. Other “self guided” opportunities would include developing common wildflower and bird guides and forest history or cultural/archaeological history guides for visitors to take on the trails. The Nature Center at Crystal-Muskie would be maintained in the rustic manner it currently is in. Work to complete displays inside the building would continue, but there would be no development to the site around the building.

## Recreation Alternative B

***Goal: Provide for a variety of recreational activities and experiences (including non-motorized and existing types of motorized uses) with an emphasis on non-motorized uses and areas with good access and modest to well developed facilities.***

### Summary of recreation management in Alternative B:

This alternative shifts from the more primitive recreation management Alternative A, to a more active recreation management and visitor experience with some motorized recreation and an emphasis on non-motorized recreation. [\(See Map B.\)](#) Recreation management under this alternative is closest to present day management although visitors would find some increase in services and amenities.

- ◆ Camping opportunities at family campgrounds would be similar to present conditions, with the addition of new or converted campsites at Carroll Lake, Clear Lake, Plum Lake, and Cunard. These additional campsites would add approximately 90 sites to the property, or about 10% of the total presently found on the forest.
- ◆ This alternative allows the permitted use of generators at some family campgrounds during limited hours, which is not a change from the current condition.
- ◆ Hunters would continue to have access to most parts of the property utilizing a well-developed system of forest, town and county roads along with trails across the forest. This would be very similar to present day conditions.
- ◆ The snowmobile trail system would retain its total number of miles. No additional trail miles are planned. Some existing snowmobile trail routes may be relocated depending on the Wild Resources Areas selected on the forest.
- ◆ There is no provision in Alternative B for ATV trails on the forest (no change from the current condition).
- ◆ A system of primitive backpack trails would connect to remote campsites on the forest (not on the map). Additional hiking trails would connect with one another and to neighboring communities.
- ◆ This alternative provides for additional Canoe Trail/Campsites along the Manitowish and Wisconsin Rivers (not on the map).
- ◆ A new designated snowshoe trail and a new hiking trail would be provided on Clear Lake. Nature Trails would be open to snowshoeing in the winter.
- ◆ Horseback riders would continue to have access to most of the property.
- ◆ All currently groomed cross country ski trails would be maintained (no change from the current condition).
- ◆ New boat landings would be provided at Carroll and Clear Lakes to ease overcrowding conditions at those locations.
- ◆ This alternative maintains the existing levels of roads and non-designated trails that are presently open for non-motorized uses such as skiing, hiking, snowshoeing and biking.
- ◆ A developed year-round Visitor Center/Interpretive Center would be constructed. A small nature center/shelter building would be built on Clear Lake.
- ◆ A disabled access trail and an amphitheater would be built near the Crystal-Muskie Nature Center.

### Description of recreation management in Alternative B by topic:

#### Hunting:

Hunter access to the property would be very similar to present day conditions. Many forest roads and trails would be open and available to those using licensed vehicles or hunter walking trails. Hunter camping by permit during the nine day deer season would be seasonably available.

#### Camping:

##### Remote Canoe and Backpacking Campsites:

Under this alternative, more canoe campsites would be added along the Manitowish and Wisconsin Rivers. Canoe campsites that may occur in a designated Wild Resources Areas in Alternative B would be reduced to a primitive

class. Under Department guidelines, primitive campsites are widely dispersed, minimally cleared, single unit sites with a fire ring and box latrine. Converting existing canoe campsites in a Wild Resources Area may mean removing picnic tables, pit toilets and other amenities.

**Rustic Campgrounds:**

Currently the NHAL has 618 rustic campsites. About 45 new rustic campsites would be added on Carrol and Plum Lakes, but on Cunard Lake 33 rustic family campsites would be converted to a rustic *group* campground for up to 50 people. (See Map B.)

- ◆ Carrol Lake: A new, larger, rustic family campground would be created on the back side of the lake, while the present campground would be converted to a Day Use Area with a boat landing.
- ◆ Plum Lake: A new, larger, rustic family campground would be created at the old Girl Scout site, while the current rustic campground would be converted to a group campground.
- ◆ Cunard Lake: The current family campground would be converted to a Youth Group Campground.

**Modern Campgrounds:**

About 45 new modern campsites would be added on Clear Lake, bringing the total modern campsites to about 395.

- ◆ Clear Lake: New campsites would be added to this existing modern campground.

**Generators:**

Recreation Alternative B proposes no change to current generator policies: generators would be allowed during certain hours in some family campgrounds by permit.

**Day Use Areas:**

Currently, the NHAL provides eight day use areas. In all alternatives, an additional day use area would be created when the Carroll Lake campground is closed (Alternative A) or moves to the other side of the lake (Alternatives B-D). See the camping section above for more information.

**Non-Motorized Areas:**

Alternative B makes no provision for designated non-motorized areas.

**Snowmobile:**

- ◆ The existing snowmobile trail system on the property would be retained. No additional trail miles would be developed.
- ◆ Existing snowmobile trail routes may be relocated due to new or existing non-motorized recreation areas on the forest.

**All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs):**

- ◆ Currently, ATVs are not allowed on the NHAL. There is no provision in Alternative B for ATV trails on the property.

**Primitive Trail System:**

Alternative B proposes a system of primitive backpack trails in the following locations:

- ◆ Siphon Springs
- ◆ Nixon/Partridge Lake
- ◆ Emerald and Fallison Lakes

These primitive backpack trails would connect to a series of widely dispersed primitive campsites on the property. Alternative A proposes a more extensive trail system, while Alternative C proposes a more limited trail system. These trails do not appear on the map.

**Other Trails:**



- ◆ Alternative B, like Alternatives A, C, and D, proposes a new hiking trail around Clear Lake. (See Map B.)
- ◆ Alternative B, like Alternatives A, C, and D, proposes a new wheelchair-accessible nature trail at the Crystal Lake Interpretive Center.

**Cross Country Ski Trails:**

Alternative B would retain all currently groomed cross country ski trails:

- ◆ Escanaba Trail
- ◆ Madeline Trail
- ◆ McNaughton Trail
- ◆ North Lakeland Discovery Center (formerly the Statehouse Lake Ski Trail)
- ◆ Raven Trail
- ◆ Razorback Ridge
- ◆ Shannon Trail

**Mountain Bike Trails:**

Cross country ski trails provide all of the designated mountain bike trails on the forest. Alternative B makes no change in the number of designated trails provided for mountain bikes. Mountain bikes may also be ridden in undesignated areas across most of the forest.

**Snowshoe Trails:**

Alternative B, like Alternatives A, C, and D, proposes the following trails be designated snowshoe trails in the winter:

- ◆ Fallison Lake (existing nature trail)
- ◆ North Trout Lake (existing nature trail)
- ◆ Star Lake (existing nature trail)
- ◆ Clear Lake Snowshoe Trail (new trail on Map B)

**Horseback Trails:**

Currently, horseback riders can ride on most of the forest, unless they are in a prohibited area. For instance, horseback riding is prohibited on nature trails. There are no designated horseback riding trails. Alternative B proposes no change in this procedure.

**Boat Landings:**

Presently, overcrowding at some boat landings on the property suggest the need for additional boat landing space. As a result, Alternative B proposes new boat landings at:

- ◆ Carroll Lake
- ◆ Clear Lake

**Education and Interpretive Center:**

Alternative B builds on the current interpretive facilities to include several new opportunities. The site around the Nature Center at Crystal –Muskie would be developed to include a disabled access interpretive trail and an amphitheater. A water pump would be installed and perhaps a heating system could be added to allow for year-round use. A small nature center/shelter building would be developed at Clear Lake Campground giving naturalists two buildings to do programs out of in the two biggest campground complexes. Alternative B would also include building a developed Visitor Center/ Interpretive Center in conjunction with a State Forest Headquarters Building with permanent displays open to visitors year-round. This Center could focus on forestry education, State Forest history, and management.

## Recreation Alternative C

***Goal: Recreation management focuses on providing a variety of motorized and non-motorized recreational activities and experiences in areas with good access and modest to well developed facilities. This is similar to alternative B but with a higher emphasis on motorized recreation.***

### Summary of recreation management in Alternative C:

Recreation management under this alternative is similar to Alternative B and present day management but with a greater emphasis on motorized recreation and new facilities to accomplish the management goal written above. In this alternative, the forest shifts towards a more developed and less rustic nature. ([See Map C.](#))

Alternative C builds on present day recreation management and Alternatives A and B by providing new motorized recreation opportunities

- ◆ ATV trails closely paralleling Highways 51 and 47 are developed under Alternative C to provide trails on the property connecting to trails and road routes in Iron County. Presently, the forest does not provide opportunities for ATV riders.
- ◆ This recreation management alternative shifts the forest from its primarily rustic family camping niche to that of a more developed property. Recreational Vehicles (RVs) would become more common.
- ◆ New campsites are added in Alternative C at several family campgrounds on the property. This would bring new sites to 20% above present levels.
- ◆ Electricity would be provided at 50% of the new off water campsites at Carroll Lake and Plum Lake. Currently, electricity is not provided in any campground on the forest.
- ◆ The use of generators would be expanded beyond Alternative B and the current condition with additional hours on some campgrounds. Currently, generators may be used by permit from 10 am to 6 pm.
- ◆ The existing snowmobile trail system would be retained in Alternative C, with a possible expansion of trails on a case by case basis. Some snowmobile trails may be relocated due to conflicts with non-motorized recreation areas.
- ◆ This alternative maintains all currently groomed cross country ski trails.
- ◆ Alternative C provides for additional boat landings at Carroll Lake and Clear Lake, and adds amenities such as pit toilets at those new boat landings.
- ◆ A new system of backpacking trails would be developed near Nixon/Partridge Lake. A new hiking trail would be developed around Clear Lake.
- ◆ This alternative maintains the existing levels of roads and non-designated trails that are presently open for motorized access for hunters and others, and for non-motorized uses such as skiing, hiking, snowshoeing and biking.
- ◆ A developed year-round Visitor Center/Interpretive Center would be constructed with a disabled access trail. A small nature center/shelter building would be built on Clear Lake.
- ◆ A disabled access trail and an amphitheater would be built near the Crystal-Muskie Nature Center.
- ◆ A self-guided auto tour and an interpretive bike trail would be developed.

### Description of recreation management in Alternative C by topic:

#### Hunting:

Hunter access to the property in Alternative C would be similar to present day conditions. Hunter camping during the nine-day deer season would remain available by permit.

**Camping:****Remote Canoe and Backpacking Campsites:**

Remote camping opportunities would be similar to Alternatives A and B, with more canoe campsites along the Manitowish and Wisconsin Rivers.

Remote campsites in designated Wild Resources Areas would be reduced to a primitive class. Under Department guidelines, primitive campsites would be widely dispersed, minimally cleared, single unit sites with a fire ring and box latrine. Converting existing canoe campsites to this level may mean removing picnic tables, pit toilets and other amenities.

**Rustic Campgrounds:**

There would be a decrease in rustic family campsites from 618 to 582 since Carrol Lake would be closed and reopened in a different location as a modern campground and Plum Lake would be converted to a rustic group campground. The Carrol Lake campground would be converted to a Day Use Area. (See Map C.)

- ◆ Plum Lake: The existing rustic family campground would be converted to a rustic group campground in Alternatives B-D.
- ◆ Carrol Lake: The existing rustic family campground would be converted to a Day Use Area with a boat landing in all alternatives.
- ◆ Cunard Lake: This rustic family campground would be converted to a rustic group campground in Alternatives B-D.

**Modern Campgrounds:**

There would be an increase of about 180 modern campsites on the NHAL, for a total of 530 modern campsites. This increase would occur at the new Carrol Lake and Plum Lake campgrounds, and Clear Lake. Some of these new sites would have electrical hook-ups. Currently there are no electrical sites on the NHAL.

- ◆ Carrol Lake and Plum Lake: In Alternative C, the new campgrounds on these lakes would be modern, with electrical hook-ups but without showers and flush toilets. Electrical service would be established at 50% of the new off-water campsites at each new campground.
- ◆ Clear Lake: Alternative C expands on the increase in sites from Alternative B, with many more campsites than present day levels, but no electrical hook-ups.

**Generators:**

The use of generators at family campgrounds is expanded beyond the level discussed in Alternative B by adding additional hours of use in some family campgrounds.

**Day Use Areas:**

Currently, the NHAL provides eight day use areas. In all alternatives, an additional day use area would be created when the Carroll Lake campground is closed (Alternative A) or moves to the other side of the lake (Alternatives B-D). See the camping section above for more information.

**Non-Motorized Areas:**

Alternative C makes no provision for designated non-motorized areas.

**Snowmobile:**

- ◆ The existing snowmobile trail system on the property is retained under Alternative C.
- ◆ New snowmobile trail miles would be determined on a case by case basis with user groups.
- ◆ Existing snowmobile trail routes may be relocated due to new or existing Wild Resources Areas or non-motorized recreation areas on the forest.

**All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs):**

Alternative C is different than Alternatives A and B in that it provides for ATV trails within the property boundary. Generally, the route would closely follow a corridor closely paralleling a north/south route along

Highway 51, with a connecting corridor parallel to Highway 47. These trails would connect to established ATV trails and town road routes in Iron County. ATV trails would not be within highway right-of-ways. (See Map C.)

**Cross Country Ski Trails:**

Alternative C would retain all currently groomed cross country ski trails:

- ◆ Escanaba Trail
- ◆ Madeline Trail
- ◆ McNaughton Trail
- ◆ North Lakeland Discovery Center (formerly the Statehouse Lake Ski Trail)
- ◆ Raven Trail
- ◆ Razorback Ridge
- ◆ Shannon Trail

**Primitive Trail System:**

Develop a system of primitive backpack trails in the following location:

- ◆ Nixon/Partridge Lake

This primitive backpack trail would connect to widely dispersed primitive campsites along the trail. It does not appear on the map.

**Other Trails:**

- ◆ Alternative C, like Alternatives A, B, and D, proposes a new hiking trail around Clear Lake. (See Map C.)
- ◆ Alternative C, like Alternatives A, B, and D, proposes a new wheelchair-accessible nature trail at the Crystal Lake Interpretive Center.

**Snowshoeing Trails:**

Alternative C, like Alternatives A, B, and D, proposes the following trails be designated snowshoe trails in the winter:

- ◆ Fallison Lake (existing nature trail)
- ◆ North Trout Lake (existing nature trail)
- ◆ Star Lake (existing nature trail)
- ◆ Clear Lake Snowshoe Trail (new trail on Map C)

**Mountain Bike Trails:**

Cross country ski trails provide all of the designated mountain bike trails on the forest. Alternative C makes no change in the number of designated trails provided for mountain bikes on ski trails. Additional mountain bike routes would be designated in this alternative along some unpaved forest roads on the property. These do not appear on the map. Mountain bikes may also be ridden in undesignated areas across most of the forest.

**Horseback Trails:**

Currently, horseback riders can ride on most of the forest, unless they are in a prohibited area. For instance, horseback riding is prohibited on nature trails. There are no designated horseback riding trails. Alternative C proposes no change in this procedure.

**Boat Landings:**

Alternative C, like Alternative B, provides for additional boat landing amenities such as pit toilets at Carroll Lake and Clear Lake.

- ◆ Carroll Lake
- ◆ Clear Lake

**Education and Interpretive Center:**

Alternative C builds on the developments in Alternative B: develop the Crystal-Muskie Nature Center site with a disabled access trail and amphitheater, develop a small nature center building at Clear Lake Campground, and develop a Visitor Center/Interpretive Center for the NHAL. Alternative C proposes an additional disabled access trail at the new Visitor Center/Interpretive Center. A new bike trail would be constructed on the NHAL that has interpretive signs or a currently existing bike trail would be signed. Finally, in Alternative C, a self-guided auto tour for the State Forest would also be developed.

## Recreation Alternative D

*Goal: Recreation management focuses on providing a variety of motorized and non-motorized recreational activities and experiences in areas with good access and modest to well developed facilities. This is similar to Alternative C but with a higher emphasis on motorized recreational opportunities.*

**Summary of recreation management in Alternative D:**

Alternative D presents the least rustic and most developed option for the NHAL. This alternative is similar to Alternative C, but would add additional ATV trails near highways and in more remote areas, campground facilities, trails and other amenities on the forest. It provides for additional electrical hook-ups at family campgrounds, new disabled access wilderness campsites, and group campsites. ([See Map D.](#))

- ◆ The forest would be less rustic in nature with more facilities, campsites and other amenities than the present forest condition or other alternatives.
- ◆ Campers would have additional opportunities from the present day management with the addition of disabled access campsites on the forest, additional campsites with electricity, and more hours of permissible generator use.
- ◆ Recreational Vehicles (RVs) would become more common with the addition of electricity at campsites. The traditional niche of the state forest for providing rustic family camping would be reduced with the general introduction of electricity in the campgrounds.
- ◆ ATV riders would have additional trail miles under Alternative D from Alternative C, with greater access to the forest. Under present day management, ATVs are not allowed on the property.
- ◆ Snowmobile enthusiasts would have the same amount of trails as the present day, with the opportunity to expand their trail system on a case by case basis.
- ◆ Cross country skiers would have additional trails that are designated and groomed for skiing under this alternative.
- ◆ Mountain bike riders would have additional designated routes on forest roads.
- ◆ New boat landings on the forest would have additional amenities including toilet facilities. Lakes where inadequate access presently exists would be targeted for new landings.
- ◆ A developed year-round Visitor Center/Interpretive Center would be constructed with a disabled access trail. A more developed nature center would be built at Clear Lake and a disabled access trail would be built there as well.
- ◆ The Crystal-Muskie Nature Center would have water and flush toilets. A disabled access trail and an amphitheater would be built nearby.
- ◆ A self-guided auto tour and an interpretive bike trail would be developed. Additional interpretive trails would be built on the northern and southern parts of the NHAL.

**Description of recreation management in Alternative D by topic:****Hunting:**

Hunter access to the property in Alternative D would be similar to present day conditions. Hunter camping during the nine-day deer season would remain available by permit.

**Camping:**Remote Canoe and Backpacking Campsites:

Remote camping opportunities would be similar to Alternatives A, B, and C with more canoe campsites along the Manitowish and Wisconsin Rivers.

- ◆ Lost Canoe Lake: This lake would have new vehicle access and disabled access wilderness campsites in Alternative D.

Remote campsites in designated Wild Resources Areas would be reduced to a primitive class. Under Department guidelines, primitive campsites would be widely dispersed, minimally cleared, single unit sites with a fire ring and box latrine. Converting existing canoe campsites to this level may mean removing picnic tables, pit toilets and other amenities.

Rustic Campgrounds:

There would be a decrease in rustic campsites from 618 to about 600 as Carrol Lake would be closed and reopened in a different location as a modern campground. The Carrol Lake campground would be converted to a Day Use Area. If White Sand Lake were developed as a rustic campground, there would be additional rustic sites added.

- ◆ Plum Lake: The existing rustic family campground would be converted to a rustic group campground in Alternatives B-D.
- ◆ Cunard Lake: This rustic family campground would be converted to a rustic group campground in Alternatives B-D.
- ◆ White Sand Lake: An area on this lake would be developed as a Family Campground, Group Campsite or Day Use Area.

Modern Campgrounds:

There would be an increase of about 180 modern campsites on the NHAL, for a total of 530 modern campsites. This increase would occur at Carrol Lake, Plum Lake, and Clear Lake. Many of these new sites would have electrical hook-ups. Currently there are no electrical sites on the NHAL.

- ◆ Carrol Lake and Plum Lake: In Alternative D, Carrol Lake would be converted to a Day Use Area and Plum Lake would be converted to a rustic group campground, while new family campgrounds would be built in alternate sites on each lake. These new campgrounds would be modern, with electrical hook-ups but without showers and flush toilets. Electrical service would be established at 100% of the new off-water campsites.
- ◆ Clear Lake: Like Alternative C, Alternative D expands on the increase in sites from Alternative B, with many more campsites than present day levels. In addition, 100% of the new off-water campsites added to Clear Lake would have electrical hook-ups.

Generators:

The use of generators in family campgrounds is expanded beyond the level in Alternative C to include all family campgrounds on the property.

**Day Use Areas:**

Currently, the NHAL provides eight day use areas. In all alternatives, an additional day use area would be created when the Carroll Lake campground is closed (Alternative A) or moves to the other side of the lake (Alternatives B-D). See the camping section above for more information.

**Non-Motorized Areas:**

Alternative D makes no provision for designated non-motorized areas.

**Snowmobile:**

- ◆ The existing snowmobile trail system is retained under Alternative D.
- ◆ Additional snowmobile trail miles would be provided on a case by case basis after discussions with user groups.
- ◆ Existing snowmobile trail routes could be relocated due to new or existing Wild Resources Areas or non-motorized recreation areas on the forest.

**All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs):**

Alternative D expands on the ATV trails proposed in Alternative C by including:

- ◆ An expanded number of corridor trails that closely parallel forest, county, state and U.S. roads and highways in the forest. These trails would connect to established ATV trails and road routes in Iron County, and have the potential to connect with Oneida County in the Willow Flowage region and Vilas County. ATV trails would not be within highway right-of-ways.
- ◆ Two trail segments that are not parallel to major roads, but are in more remote areas of the forest. One of these areas uses a southern segment of the existing snowmobile Highlands Trail.

**Cross Country Ski Trails:**

Alternative D provides grooming to cross country ski trails at several new locations on the forest beyond present levels. Alternatives B and C provide for the existing level of grooming for ski trails at:

- ◆ Escanaba Trail
- ◆ Madeline Trail
- ◆ McNaughton Trail
- ◆ North Lakeland Discovery Center (formerly the Statehouse Lake Ski Trail)
- ◆ Raven Trail
- ◆ Razorback Ridge
- ◆ Shannon Trail

Alternative D expands existing trails and provides grooming at one new cross-country ski trail. Although they do not appear on the map, changes would occur in the following locations:

- ◆ Powell Trail: Expand trail system and begin to groom trails
- ◆ Shannon Ski Trail: Expand trail system and groom trails
- ◆ Lumberjack Trail: Groom trail

**Primitive Trail System:**

Develop a system of primitive backpack trails in the following area:

- ◆ Nixon/Partridge Lake

**Snowshoeing Trails:**

Alternative D, like Alternatives A-C, proposes the following trails be designated snowshoe trails in the winter:

- ◆ Fallison Lake (existing nature trail)
- ◆ North Trout Lake (existing nature trail)
- ◆ Star Lake (existing nature trail)
- ◆ Clear Lake Snowshoe Trail (new trail on Map D)

**Mountain Bike Trails:**

Cross country ski trails provide all of the designated mountain bike trails on the forest. Alternative D makes no change in the number of designated trails provided for mountain bikes on ski trails. Mountain bikes may also be ridden in undesignated areas across most of the forest.

**Horseback Trails:**

Currently, horseback riders can ride on most of the forest, unless they are in a prohibited area. For instance, horseback riding is prohibited on nature trails. There are no designated horseback riding trails. Alternative D proposes no change in this procedure.

**Other Trail Opportunities:**

- ◆ Alternative D, like Alternatives A - C, proposes a new hiking trail around Clear Lake. (See Map D.)
- ◆ Alternative D, like Alternatives A - C, proposes a new wheelchair-accessible nature trail at the Crystal Lake Interpretive Center.

**Boat Landings:**

Additional boat landings would be provided as indicated in Alternative C, with boat landing amenities including pit toilets at each of the sites at:

- ◆ Carroll Lake
- ◆ Clear Lake

**Education and Interpretive Center:**

Alternative D places the highest emphasis on developed facilities. In keeping with this idea, it builds on what is present in Alternative C (a developed year-round Visitor Center/Interpretive Center with a disabled access trail, a small nature center/shelter building on Clear Lake, a disabled access trail and an amphitheater at the Crystal-Muskie Nature Center, and a self-guided auto tour and an interpretive bike trail).

Alternative D would continue to develop the Crystal-Muskie Nature Center to include flush toilets and hot/cold water. A similar nature center facility would be developed at Clear Lake Campground. Additional disabled access trails would be built at Crystal-Muskie Nature Center, Clear Lake Nature Center, and the Visitor Center/Interpretive Center. An additional nature/interpretive trail and a self-guided auto tour would be developed for both the Northern Highland and American Legion portions of the NHAL State Forest.